

Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage

Contributed by Ron Freeman, Evangelist, on Aug 10, 2015

Scripture: Matthew 5:27-28, Matthew 5:31-32, Luke 16:18, Matthew 19:1-9, 1 Corinthians 7:10-15

Summary: To present sound teaching on marriage, divorce, and remarriage. Marriage is honorable in all, and he that findeth a wife, findeth a good thing. This lesson refutes the notion that a baptized believer must return to their former spouse as fruits of repentance.

INTRODUCTION

Outline.

1. Christ's Discourse on "Marriage"
2. Christ's Discourse on "Divorce"
3. Christ's Discourse on "Remarriage"

Introductory Remarks.

1. This lesson will discuss "marriage, divorce, and remarriage." This topic is among the most misunderstood and debated in the Christian faith. What will be evident as we proceed is that there are more diverse opinions on this topic than there is truth! We will stand firm in the Bible regarding these issues. There are three positions on these issues: legalism, liberalism, and conservatism. Let me add that Jesus' position on this topic was that of the word of God. Saying unto the leaders, "Have ye not read?" Matthew 19:4.

2. First, we will address the topic of marriage as discussed by the Lord and others. The Hebrew writer states: "Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge," Hebrews 13:4. Jesus states: "Marriage was to be permanent." Divorce was granted because of the hardness of the hearts of the people of Israel. Jesus said: "Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so," Matthew 19:8.

3. Second, we will discuss the issue of divorce as described by the Lord. He mentioned: "And I say unto you, whosoever shall put away his wife, except it is for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery," Matthew 19:9; Matthew 5:32. In these scriptures Jesus permits divorce for one *reason only*, and that is: "infidelity." That is, one or both parties are guilty of sexual misconduct. Divorce could be granted for "fornication, adultery, and other sexual sins." However, in these verses, Jesus does not mention forgiveness or staying with the unfaithful partner. Nor does he mention who could or could not remarry if the divorce was granted, even for the "exception:" of infidelity. We will deal with these issues in this lesson.

4. Lastly, we will discuss the issue of remarriage as described by the Lord. Notice he says: "And whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery," Matthew 19:9. One must conclude that remarriage by one or both parties, if divorced for any other reason than the "exception," doth commit adultery. The question on this topic not mentioned by the Lord - in this text - is, can one or both parties of divorce for the "exception" be allowed to remarry without committing adultery? However, this question has been given exhaustive discussion by many writers, but with minimal mention of scripture from the New Testament! We will also deal with this notion at the proper time. But for now, let's look first at what Jesus says about marriage.

BODY OF LESSON

I CHRIST'S DISCOURSE ON "MARRIAGE"

A. As mentioned before: "Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge," Hebrews 13:4.

1. Solomon wrote: "Whoso findeth a wife, findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favor of the Lord," Proverb 18:22. Also: "House and riches are the inheritance of fathers: and a prudent wife is from the LORD," Proverb 19:14.

2. Marriage in Jesus' time. There were two schools of thought on this issue then; one was from the school of Shammai – which permitted divorce for only "adultery or fornication," and the second was from the school of Hillel – which permitted divorce for any reason or "cause." From this teaching (Hillel), the "Pharisees came tempting Jesus saying unto him, is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?" Matthew 19:3. To answer their question, Jesus said:

a. "Have you not read?" – referring to the beginning. "God made them male and female."

b. "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother – and is joined to his wife, they shall be one flesh."

c. "What God has joined together – let no man put asunder, undo."

3. The Jewish leaders then asked: "Why did Moses, command to give a writing of divorce and to put away?"

4. Jesus responded: "Because of the hardness of your hearts – he suffered you to put away your wives. From the beginning, it was not so." From the beginning, God's design in marriage was that it should be permanent.

B. God recognizes all marriages. Marriage is "leaving and cleaving." Marriage is the leaving of mother and father and the cleaving unto his wife. Observe,

1. Jesus said: "For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh."

2. Jesus concludes: "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder," Matthew 19:5-6. What God has joined in marriage, let no man break it.

C. Wife is bound to her husband. The wife is bound by the Law of her husband so long as he is alive. But once he dies, she is freed from the Law and the marriage contract. Notice,

1. Paul's Letter to the Corinthians: "The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband is dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord," 1 Corinthians 7:39.

2. Paul's Letter to the Romans: "Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth?" Paul discusses the Law of marriage,

a. First, "For the woman which hath a husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he liveth." So long as the husband lives, she is bound by the Law and the marriage contract.

b. Further, "But if the husband is dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband." The Law no longer binds her; death has severed the marriage contract. She is no longer married to her husband; she is loosed from the marriage contract to her husband.

c. Next, "So if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress." It is, therefore, marrying another man while her first husband still lives, making her an adulteress. Isn't this what the Bible is declaring? And the church said: Amen.

d. Finally, "But if her husband is dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she is married to another man," Romans 7:1-3. Under that Law,

e. Conclusion: So long as the husband is alive and has not granted her a "bill of divorcement," if she marries another man, she shall be called an adulteress. But if her husband is dead, she is no longer married and may marry another man and not be called or considered an adulteress. Paul clears up a fundamental truth in these verses. We will come back to this principle later in the lesson. But, for now, let's consider,

D. The Law of Marriage under Moses. Moses wrote: "When a man hath taken a wife and married her, and it comes to pass that she finds no favor in his eyes because he hath found some uncleanness in her: then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house." Observe,

1. First, "And when she is departed out of his house, she may go and be another man's wife." Why is she permitted to marry another man? She has in her hand a bill of divorce. This bill certifies that she is no longer married to her former husband.

2. Further, "And if the latter husband hates her, and write her a bill of divorcement, and giveth it in her hand, and sendeth her out of his house; or if the latter husband dies, which took her to be his wife."

3. Next, "Her former husband (first husband), who sent her away, may not retake her to be his wife; after that, she is defiled."

4. Finally, "For that is an abomination before the LORD: and thou shalt not cause the land to sin, which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance," Deuteronomy 24:1-4.

5. Conclusion: The Law forbade the first husband to retake his former wife if her present husband divorced her or died and left her a widow. However, the legalist's position is for the woman to return to her former husband. Moses did not permit such under the Old Testament. Should it be allowed today? Observe,

a. First, why is it espoused as New Testament doctrine today if it was not permitted under the Law?

b. Second, if it wasn't permitted under Moses' Law because it polluted the land, how could such teaching be acceptable in the church of Christ in the first century or a part of the Lord's church in the 21st century?"

c. I conclude: If it was wrong under the Old Testament, it is also wrong under the New Testament. Recall, "Those things written afore time was written for our learning," Romans 15:4. We will return to this later in the lesson.

E. A woman with five husbands. Jesus found a woman at Jacob's well with five husbands and saith unto her: "Go, call thy husband, and come hither." The Woman answered and said: "I have no husband." Jesus said unto her: "Thou hast well said: 'I have no husband.' For thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly," John 4:16-18. Observe,

1. The Lord said this Woman had five husbands and then lived with a man who was not her husband. During this time, the man was permitted to divorce his wife for any reason (Hillel's view).

2. However, the Woman had no right to divorce her husband under Jewish Law. What Jesus has done in Matthew 19:9 was to level the playing field (which we will consider later in this lesson)

in divorce cases. Jesus accepted that the Woman was legally married five times. I'm not sure many here could, but Jesus accepted each marriage and divorce as legal under the Law of Moses.

3. If this Samaritan Woman obeyed the gospel, which husband should she return to, as argued by many today? Notice,

a. She was legally married and legally divorced under the Law. Her standing is clear from the Lord's comments, "Thou hast well said, 'I have no husband.'"

b. He said further: "For thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly," John 4:18.

c. Married five times, now living with a man, yet having no husband. Please note whose declaration of being free from her husband was - Jesus, the Son of God.

4. If this Woman left her live-in partner or quit "shacking," would she be a fit subject for the kingdom of God? I suggest that some of our brothers have sent such a person away without compassion and forgiveness. They are frightened that such a person could become a member of the kingdom of God. These are those whom Christ died for and shed his precious blood! I might ask now,

a. Could the grace of God save her? As a result of Philip's preaching in Samaria, Acts 8:1-12. Can the grace of God save any woman in a similar case? Or, has grace no place for such a person as this Woman? How foolish such a thought!

b. Remember, she had five husbands! Probably not one of her divorces was of her choosing. Neither was one of them for fornication or adultery (this would have required that she be stoned to death), John 8:5; Leviticus 20:10; Deuteronomy 22:22. If this were the case, this conversation would never have taken place in the gospel of John.

5. If this Woman repented of her "fornication" and left the man. Could the grace of God save her? Would this be sufficient as "fruits of repentance?"

6. Would she be free to marry under the Law of Christ, whoever she will "only in the Lord?" 1 Corinthians 7:39. Many today would argue strongly against these proposals. They are not true believers of the grace of God, Ephesians 2:8-10; Titus 3:4-7. The church needs an awakening on this subject! Let's continue to investigate the truth regarding this subject. Let's discuss what our Lord says about divorce.

II CHRIST'S DISCOURSE ON "DIVORCE"

A. Divorce is described as the "putting away" of one's spouse. There are many reasons for divorce throughout the United States and the world. Some are: "We are no longer compatible; no longer in love; I have found someone else, and we have outgrown each other," just to mention a few.

1. However, the Lord gives His commandment on this subject. Divorce was permitted under the Law but not commanded by the Law of Christ.

2. It was granted because of the hardness of their hearts. Hearts become hardened through unbelief, disobedience, and sin, Hebrews 3:12-13; Hebrews 3:19; Hebrews 4:1-2; Hebrews 4:11.

3. It is time to discuss divorce WITHOUT the "exception."

4. This might be when most of the debate, disagreement, and arguments will begin. Just remember we say all these things by the authority of the scriptures: with our Bibles open and love and compassion in our words. Will I "become your enemy because I tell you the truth?" Galatians 4:16. I pray this will not be the case!

B. Divorce without exception. Matthew wrote: "The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?"

1. They sought to tempt the Lord regarding this issue: "And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female?" Matthew 19:3-8.

2. Jesus goes on to address His position on this matter. He says: "And I say unto you, whosoever shall put away his wife, except it is for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery," Matthew 19:9. Why would such a case be "adultery?" Observe,

a. In this statement, both parties are still legally bound to each other because God has not set aside the marriage contract. God does the binding and the unbinding. Won't you agree? Both, if they remarry, committeth adultery. Please note that it is the marrying of another while legally bound to another that causes this form of adultery. However,

b. Many would argue that it is sexual cohabitation that causes the sin of adultery. If this be so, could they abstain from sexual cohabitation – and remain married and no longer be guilty of adultery? Of course, they would answer – NO!

c. This form of adultery is caused by either party remarrying while still legally bound by the Law of marriage to their former spouse. The marriage contract has not been loosed, broken, or "put asunder" by God. Let's notice Brother Johnson on this question. Observe,

3. B. W. Johnson wrote: "In the beginning, there was no divorce (or) polygamy. The first polygamist was the race of Cain (Gen. 4:19) ... I say unto you. We have Christ's Law of divorce in contrast with Moses's, except for fornication. There is only one sufficient cause of divorce: unfaithfulness to the marriage relation...Because he is still married to his former wife, who is still his wife despite the divorce; so, if any man marries the divorced Woman, he marries another man's wife," Page 120. Brother Johnson answered two questions regarding divorce and the number of wives a man could legally have in marriage.

a. First, how many wives could a man have? "In the beginning, there was no divorce and no polygamy. The first polygamist was the race of Cain (Gen. 4:19). Divorce was granted to prohibit this situation.

b. Second, can a man divorce his wife for any cause? "There is only one sufficient cause of divorce: unfaithfulness to the marriage relation...Because he is still married to his former wife, who is still his wife despite the divorce; so, if any man marries the divorced Woman, he marries another man's wife."

c. For this cause, John the Baptist forbade Herod to have his brother's wife; she was still legally married to her husband Philip under the Law, Luke 3:19-20; Mark 6:14-20.

d. Analysis and summary. Both polygamy and divorce were not from the beginning. But God permitted both because of the "hardness of the people's hearts," Acts 17:30-32; Romans 3:23-26. Christ's marriage law acknowledges "one man and one wife" for life. Such virtues are required for anyone desiring the "office of a bishop or deacon...to be the husband of one wife," 1 Timothy 3:2; 1 Timothy 3:12; Titus 1:6. Here is another author's views of Jesus' discourse on marriage, divorce, and remarriage. Observe,

4. Matthew Henry wrote: "Now our Saviour mitigates the rigor of that and appoints divorce as the penalty. Dr. Whitby understands this, not of adultery, but (because our Saviour uses the word

porneia—fornication) of uncleanness committed before marriage, but discovered afterward; because, if it were committed after, it was a capital crime, and there needed no divorce...He disallows it in all other cases: Whosoever puts away his wife, except fornication, and marries another, commits adultery. This is a direct answer to their query that it is not lawful...The Law of Christ tends to reinstate man in his primitive integrity; (to) the Law of love, conjugal love, is no new commandment but was (ordained) from the beginning," Page 477. [These comments agree with Christ's teaching to the Samaritan Woman regarding her five husbands, earlier mentioned in this lesson].

5. Conclusion: We should never become so indoctrinated into laws that we forget the blessings of God's "love, mercy, and grace" to all sinners. There is no sin that God's grace cannot forgive, which could be necessary for any marriage (before or after gospel obedience). There is forgiveness for all "through faith and obedience to the gospel," 1 Corinthians 6:9-11.

NOTE: Download our lesson from SermonCentral.com, "The Husband of One Wife," by Ron Freeman, Evangelist. This sermon is a broader discussion of the meaning of "the husband of one wife," as written by Paul to Timothy and Titus. Now, here is the exception for divorce under the Law of Christ. Observe,

C. Divorce for the exception. Now, let's notice what Jesus says regarding His exception. Jesus teaches: "And I say unto you, whosoever shall put away his wife, (for the) exception of fornication, and shall marry another, (does not) committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth (not) commit adultery," Matthew 19:9. The exception Jesus grants permit the offended party to put away their spouse. The marriage is no longer binding - they are loosed from the marriage contract. The offended party is free to remarry. (Italics and parentheses are my insertions). Observe,

1. Therefore, it stands to reason that if one party is loosed from the marriage contract, the other party would also be loosed.

2. The legalist would require the guilty party to be still bound - and unable to remarry. Notice,
a. Divorce is like death - if the husband dies, the wife is free to remarry. She is no longer bound to her husband, who is in the grave.

NOTE: Illustrate "Plowing a field with two oxen." Loose one; the other is also free.

b. If one is legally divorced, the other party cannot still be bound - they also have been freed from the marriage contract!

c. If marriage is "binding" the two together, then divorce, for the exception, has "unbounded" both from the marriage contract by God.

D. Divorce for desertion. In many marriages, desertion often becomes an item of discussion. Paul discusses this notion as another possible reason for divorce. He describes two scenarios regarding marriage and the "putting away" of one's spouse for desertion, 1 Corinthians 7:10-16.

NOTE: Paul provides commandments (instruction) for Christian and non-Christians' responsibilities to their believing and unbelieving spouse. These instructions have minimal mention in most discussions on this topic throughout our brotherhood. Observe,

1. The Christian. The Christian is commanded not to depart from her/his husband/wife. But if one does depart, they are to remain unmarried or be reconciled, 1 Corinthians 7:10-11. The Christian may be required to depart from a believing spouse, but he/she is not permitted to remarry but to be reconciled to his/her spouse (husband or wife).

a. To the married, I command. Some might say, "If the unmarried state is best now, it will be better to leave our married partner." He replies, "The Lord commands otherwise," (Mark 10:12; Matthew 5:32; Matthew 19:9).

1) But if she departs. Despite the prohibition, there is such disagreement or continued abuse that she is forced to leave her husband; she must remain unmarried or be reconciled. Remember who Paul speaks of in this warning: a Christian woman, not an unbeliever. He continues,

2) Let not the husband put away his wife. The wife "departs" because she leaves the home; the husband "puts away his wife" by sending her away (by divorce).

3) B. W. Johnson wrote: "Both are equally prohibited (in this text). The same rules apply to each case (departing or putting away), one's spouse. Among the Jews, only the husband exercised the right of divorce; among the Greeks and Romans, the wife exercised it equally with the husband." NOTE: Reference, People's New Testament, Explanatory Notes, on 1 Corinthians, page 94.

b. One cannot use this option to allow Satan to tempt the other party to sin and then find a reason for divorce. Remember: "Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise, the wife unto the husband. The wife hath not the power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise, the husband hath not the power of his own body, but the wife."

c. Paul continued: "Defraud you, not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempts you not for your incontinency," 1 Corinthians 7:3-5.

d. Paul speaks here of providing for the sexual needs of each other - willingly and lovingly.

2. The non-Christian, if he/she be pleased to be married, let not the brother or sister "put away" his/her spouse, 1 Corinthians 7:12-14. We are commanded to remain in the marriage for their sake and the children.

3. The unbeliever: "But, if the unbelieving departs, let them depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases, but God hath called us to peace. For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? Or how do you know, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?" 1 Corinthians 7:15-16.

a. Paul's instruction is that believers should move on with their lives. Also, Paul neither forbids nor encourages the remarriage of the party that has been left behind.

b. He merely states - "The brother or sister is not under bondage in such cases."

c. If this party contemplates remarriage, everything regarding their previous life and marriage should be revealed to the proposed partner. All things should be disclosed to correctly inform their new partner before the union and not after it.

d. Minister's recommendation. Due to many prayers, fasting, and counsel, this must be decided with a strong church leadership team (minister and wife, or elder and wife combination).

4. When desertion takes place - more than likely, infidelity has already occurred or will occur. A brother or sister is not under "bondage" in such cases.

a. Paul speaks of the marriage contract - it no longer binds them.

b. They are released from the contract of marriage.

c. Just like in death: "She has been freed from the marriage contract, and the law of her husband," Romans 7:2-3. I suggest,

5. Therefore, three conditions can break the marriage bond: death, divorce (fornication), and outright desertion of the unbeliever.

a. There is no instruction to forbid remarrying in either case. Nor is there any instruction to remarry or return to such an unbelieving spouse. I wish I had some help!

b. This is left up to the one offended and the Lord, to whom they continue to serve faithfully. The only commandment is that: "She/he should marry in the Lord," 1 Corinthians 7:39. This rule applies to both the husband and wife.

E. Forgiveness and reconciliation. In all these passages, Jesus does not discuss forgiveness and reconciliation after a partner has committed fornication or adultery. The voice of divorce is silent on these principles of love, compassion, and forgiveness. But I will speak to them now, as the servant of the Lord. Please consider these,

1. God has and can forgive the adulterers and the sin of adultery. And we who claim to be His servants must learn to forgive, even in these offenses. Before we notice the last point, let's review the attitude of our heavenly Father and Jesus in this matter. Consider the forgiveness of Jesus for these types of sins. Recall,

a. The Woman caught in adultery. She was caught in the very act. Christ said: "Woman, where are thine accusers? Hath, no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more," John 8:1-11.

1) The Law required that she be stoned, but Jesus set aside this penalty and forgave her sin as an act of grace on her behalf.

Note: I encourage you to download our lesson: "Woman Where are Your Accusers," from SermonCentral.com, by Ron Freeman, Evangelist. It presents another perspective of this charitable act of forgiveness by the Master.

2) Do you believe the Lord Jesus Christ can forgive this sin today? See Leviticus 20:10; Deuteronomy 22:22.

b. The Woman at the Well, John 4:1-24. As mentioned earlier in the lesson, she was married five times and divorced, then lived with a man. Could the grace of God forgive this Woman's sins? According to some legalists, if she was one of the converts in Samaria due to Philip's preaching, which husband should she return to as the fruit of repentance? See John 4:39-43; Acts 8:1-5; Acts 8:12. The answer is neither.

1) Grace does not demand that she return to any husband (she has none).

2) And the Law of Moses forbade any from returning to their first husband, as some demand today (as being necessary to obtain forgiveness).

3) God's grace has forgiven all her sins in such cases.

c. Recall Moses wrote: "Her former husband, which sent her away, may not retake her to be his wife, after that she is defiled," Deuteronomy 24:4. See Jeremiah 3:1. Therefore,

1) The Law of Moses did not permit the first husband to return to his wife – nor the wife to return to her husband. Why is this teaching the doctrine of the New Testament church?

2) If this practice (return to the former spouse) defiled the land under the Law, would it not defile the church of Christ today? Remember, "Those things written aforetime were written for our learning," Romans 15:4; 1 Corinthians 10:11-12.

3) The Lord would not permit such with His bride, the church of Christ, Ephesians 1:4, Ephesians 5:25-27; 2 Corinthians 11:2; Colossians 1:22.

4) We will speak more of this in our last point in the lesson.

2. Paul's Letter to the Corinthians. He wrote: "Know ye (you) not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with humanity, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God," 1 Corinthians 6:9-11. I humbly ask,

- a. Were any adulterers in this text married, divorced, and remarried?
- b. Did God also call, wash, sanctify, and justify them when He forgave their sins?
- c. If the Lord and our heavenly Father can forgive, we too much grow in grace and love to do the same thing in these offenses. Amen, church. It is quiet up in this house!

3. Law where there is no law. Have we allowed some in the church to make a law where there is no law? Some who read or hear this lesson will need help with this teaching. Not because it is wrong but because many have been hurt by divorce or have some family member divorced without the "exception." I will present God's answer to this dilemma in the last point of this lesson. It is sufficient to say today, as the early church did regarding another schism. Observe,

- a. The Law of circumcision. Luke wrote: "For as much as we have heard, that certain which went out from us troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying: Ye must be circumcised and keep the law...to whom we gave no such commandment," Acts 15:24.
- b. The men of the first century who attempted to bind on the church, where they had no authority to bind, so are some binding this doctrine: (you must leave your current wife/husband and return to your former wife/husband); where they have no authority to bind, in the 21st-century churches of Christ.
- c. Peter wrote: "If any man speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God," 1 Peter 4:11. See also 2 Timothy 2:15; 2 Timothy 3:16-17.
- d. Only the apostles had the authority of: "Binding and loosing," Matthew 16:18-19; Acts 2:42; 1 Corinthians 14:37.

4. We must learn to forgive the adulterers. With this sin, the believer must learn to be as gracious as God is to those who commit them. Forgiveness is possible; reconciliation is recommended!

a. Some, however, are broken to such a degree that forgiveness is impossible; reconciliation is not an option because a great bond of trust, affection, and sanctification has been violated. They will need time, prayer, and counsel to heal from this hurt. All things are possible with God, Matthew 19:26.

b. Jesus permits divorce for unfaithfulness or infidelity (sexual immorality). Let's be clear that the Lord permits divorce, but he does not command it. A greater good could be served for the offended if they are willing to forgive and reconcile with their spouse after suffering such hurt and betrayal. Observe,

- 1) Many saints have done this already, and you can too! It even becomes more critical when there are children in the family.
- 2) Your lack of forgiveness makes them victims in this divorce case. Often, they are taught to hate or despise their other parent. They can become scarred for life!
- 3) They are still the child of their father or mother! It matters not regarding their behavior in the marriage. They will continue to love Mom or Dad despite all your angry and hateful words about them. Forgive them!

4) Do this for them, if not for yourself. God will help you get through all this hurt and bitterness. Hear Paul,

c. He admonishes: "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, *forgiving one another*, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you," Ephesians 4:31-32. See also 1 Peter 3:8-11.

d. Paul encourages the husbands: "To love their wives and not to be bitter against them," Colossians 3:19; Ephesians 5:25-33.

1) The love of one's wife should compel forbearance and forgiveness in all things. Why not in this area, also? "Love will cover a multitude of sins," 1 Peter 4:8; James 5:19-20.

2) And, of course, the same would apply to the wife regarding her husband's weakness. Although one might have the right to "put away" one's spouse, a greater good might be served through sincere forgiveness.

3) I do not seek to place blame on either party in this matter. I stand before you and plead for forgiveness, healing, and renewal of the love that caused you both once to say, "I do!" Say, "I will," beginning now with God's love and help in our lives! May God grant you strength and love as you make a decision that will benefit all in this sensitive matter! Considering now our last point, the Lord's discourse on "remarriage."

III CHRIST'S DISCOURSE ON "REMARRIAGE"

A. Where remarriage is not permitted. Jesus clearly states that if one remarries without being divorced for the "exception," the new union is one of "adultery." Or they commit adultery due to this newly formed marriage union. Why?

1. Simply because the one who marries outside Jesus' "exception" is still legally bound to their former spouse and is not permitted to marry another.

2. My question to all today: "What makes this union adultery?" Is it the marriage or the sexual intimacy that results within the marriage?

3. Please think about that as I continue the lesson. We will answer that question and deal with all the old arguments at the proper time.

B. Where remarriage is permitted for those scripturally divorced. Let's deal with remarriage for the offended party: those who obtained a divorce for the "exception and now desire to remarry." Observe,

1. Looking carefully at the passage: "And I say unto you, whosoever shall put away his wife, (for fornication), and shall marry another, (doth not) committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth (not) commit adultery," Matthew 19:9. (Italics and parentheses are my insertions).

2. Here is the situation: Jesus permits remarriage for the party that has sought divorce for infidelity (fornication or adultery). Why?

a. Remarriage is possible because the person granted a divorce from their former spouse is no longer married to them. Won't you agree?

b. Why? Because God has granted the "putting away," and the parties are no longer married. The marriage contract is not binding!

c. Like death, the wife is no longer bound by the marriage contract and can remarry to whom she will: "Only in the Lord," 1 Corinthians 7:39. Consider,

d. Matthew Henry wrote: "As long as the husband lives, the wife is bound by the Law, confined to one husband, and bound to continue and cohabit with him...The marriage contract is for life; death only can annul the bond. But the husband is dead; she is at liberty to marry whom she will. There is no limitation by God's Law to be married only for (a given) number of times. It is certain, from this passage, that second marriages are not unlawful, for then the widow could not be at liberty to marry whom she (pleases) nor to marry a second time. But the (Apostle) asserts she has such a liberty, when her husband is dead, only with a limitation that she marries in the Lord," Page 774. (Insertion is mine).

NOTE: Jesus did not limit the number of times one could be married. See Matthew 22:23-33. Paul was concerned that marriage to an unbeliever could hamper the believer's faithfulness. There is no number of times one could be lawfully married provided their former spouse has died or has been legally divorced for the "exception" Jesus has given.

e. B. W. Johnson inscribed: "The Law binds the wife, etc. One point remains to be discussed, viz., The remarriage of widows. I suppose that the (Letter) of inquiry asked about this. She is at liberty. In case of her husband's death, she is free from the marriage bond and can marry whom she will, with one limitation—she must marry (one) in the Lord, a Christian. An alien marriage is prohibited. Indeed, so far was an ancient Christian from marrying an unbeliever...when the sinner was converted, he could still live with an unconverted partner," Page 455. (Insertion is mine for clarity).

NOTE: There is, however, a notion regarding the elders and deacons' number of times they could be married. I discuss this in our lesson: "The Husband of One Wife," now on SermonCentral.com. Download this lesson; this illness has hindered the church of Christ from properly ordaining "elders and deacons" as part of the church's leadership team.

C. The question that remains. What is the status of the guilty party in this sin (the one that committed the adultery – which resulted in the divorce from their spouse?) Before answering this question, let's review Christ's definition of marriage and divorce. Recall,

1. Marriage is God's "joining" of a man and a woman. It is the leaving of mother and father – and cleaving to his wife/her husband, Matthew 19:5.

a. They are no more twain, but one flesh, and what "God has joined together let no man put asunder," Matthew 19:6.

b. Is it safe to say – that God performs the marriage and joins the man and Woman together? And that union is to be, for as long as they both shall live!

2. Divorce is the "putting asunder" of the union of a man and a woman by God. God has said: "Let no man put this union asunder."

a. As He can marry – He can divorce – for the "exception" the Son of God has permitted – infidelity. (Remember, Christ would instead that forgiveness and reconciliation take place; however, He has granted the option of divorce to the offended party).

b. We would trust that all efforts will be/were taken by both parties to save the marriage; however, this might be the only option in some cases (because one continues this sinful practice even though repeatedly forgiven by the other party).

c. In a scriptural divorce, God grants the "putting away" – and releases the offended party from the bond of marriage (the marriage contract).

1) They can marry again without committing adultery – because the marriage contract has been terminated.

2) They are not legally bound to their spouse – God has granted the divorce and dissolved the marriage union. If not, why not?

3. Can we have one party loose and the other bound? The question before us now is – can we have one party released from the marriage contract – and the other still bound by it?

a. The answer is "no;" this is no more possible than a woman is still bound to her husband – after he has died and is buried. She is free from the marriage contract because her husband is dead. Will you also agree?

b. If the offended party is free – so is the one that committed the offense – the act of "fornication" that led to the divorce. The guilty party is also divorced!

c. One party cannot be freed from the marriage contract while the other is still bound. There is no longer a contract of marriage existing between them! Both parties are divorced or "put away" in this marriage. Therefore,

D. Remarriage is possible when one is legally divorced or due to the death of one's spouse. Then, we all agree that remarriage is possible after the death or the scriptural divorce of one's spouse. Let the church say Amen!

1. We have observed in this lesson that the marriage bond can be broken for three reasons: death, divorce (fornication), and desertion.

2. The question remains: "What is the offender's situation or fate?" Or, that person who committed adultery and caused them to be "put away" or divorced? Here is where actual bitterness, anger, and resentment remain in the hearts of many who have been through a divorce.

3. There has been more discussion on this person than any other party by all who have written about this subject. There are several prominent views – notice I said views; and not necessarily the truth of the Scriptures. Many are mere conjectures and not founded in God's word. Here are a few:

a. They cannot remarry – must bear the guilt and punishment for their adultery.

b. They can be forgiven but cannot remarry and are still bound to the marriage contract.

c. They can be forgiven – and remarry – and they are freed from the marriage contract.

4. To settle this question, we must determine the actual sin outlined in Matthew 19:9. It must be understood clearly! Can you "handle it?"

a. It's clear that the: "putting away;" must be for: "fornication" or "unfaithfulness."

b. But what causes the sin of "adultery" mentioned in this verse and others?

E. The sin of adultery in Matthew 19:9. Some argue it is a sin of cohabitation that takes place due to the marriage. This sexual relationship occurs in the marriage bed, Hebrews 13:4. They allege,

1. The parties now live in a continual state of adultery because of their sexual relationship. Others would argue it is a sin of marriage – the union with another partner while still legally bound to their former spouse.

2. Let's entertain both as we begin to conclude this lesson. "Come now let us reason together," Isaiah 1:18. And, "Debate thy cause with thy neighbor himself," Proverbs 25:9. Consider the following,

- a. First, it is the cohabitation (sexual relationship) that causes adultery. If this is the case – then each could do as Jesus instructed the Woman caught in adultery – “Go and sin no more.”
 - 1) In other words, continue to live in this relationship, but without sexual contact. As Jesus forgave this Woman's sins, He could forgive theirs after repentance and abstaining from further intimacy.
 - 2) Some would not agree with this position, even though many have followed this course of action – believing their salvation depends upon this sacrifice of faith to please God.
 - 3) I have known and counseled such members over the years. True repentance would be to abstain from any future sexual relationship – or be guilty of adultery. This behavior concludes our first position, and here is the other.
- b. Further, it is the marriage that causes the adultery. The other position is the marriage to another partner while still being legally bound to their former spouse, which causes them to commit adultery. Remember Paul's discussion of this in Romans 7:1-3? I told you we must revisit this Letter at this time in the lesson.
- c. Finally, it is the marriage to another person while the husband lives, and in this case, while not legally divorced from their former spouse. These are the same. Notice our Lord and Paul again, with these principles in mind. Observe,
 - 1) The Law of Christ. Jesus said: “Whosoever...marrieth another, without a divorce for the “exception” or fornication, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away, doth also commit adultery,” Matthew 19:9.
 - 2) The Law of Moses. Paul wrote: “If a woman marrieth another man, without having a (“writing of divorcement”) while her husband liveth, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her, doth also commit adultery,” Romans 7:3. (Words and parentheses are my insertions).
 - 3) These two principles are the same: death and divorce for the “exception;” free the other party from the marriage contract.
 - a) If a woman marries another man while her husband lives or has been divorced for a reason other than the “exception,” she commits adultery.
 - b) And he whosoever marrieth her, doth also commit adultery.
 - 4) We should note, at this time, that it is the inherent right of a married man and woman to enjoy the intimacy of marriage (sexual relationship). Still, indulging in such intimacy outside the marriage bed is a sin. And the church said, Amen!
- 3. What should a person do? I will conclude this discussion by stating what the Apostle Paul directed the church at Corinth to do. He wrote to those who were: “Sanctified, called to be saints, by the gospel of Christ,” 1 Corinthians 1:2; 2 Corinthians 1:21-22. These instructions were penned in his marriage discussion in 1 Corinthians, chapter 7. Observe,
 - a. First, “But as God hath distributed to every man, as the Lord hath called everyone, so let him walk. And so, ordain I in all churches. Is any man called being circumcised? Let him not become uncircumcised. Is any called in uncircumcision? Let him not be circumcised. Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing but the keeping of the commandments of God.” He continued,
 - b. Further, “Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called. Art, thou called being a servant? Care not for it, but if thou mayest be free, use it. For he that is called in the Lord, being

a servant, is the Lord's freeman: likewise, he that is called, being free, is Christ's servant. Ye are bought with a price; be not the servants of men."

c. Finally, "Brethren, let every man, wherein he is called, therein abide with God," 1 Corinthians 7:17- 24. The message: "Abide in the calling wherein ye have been called."

4. How about this: "Let everyone abide in the marriage wherein they have been called; let them therein abide with God."

a. If these believers were: "Washed, sanctified and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God," 1 Corinthians 6:11.

b. If these Corinthians are now: "In Christ, and have become new creatures: and old things being passed away; behold, all things being new," 2 Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 2:10. Tell me, I pray thee what is left behind for one to return too?

c. Could the believers today obey the same "calling" through the gospel and obtain the same blessing? If not, why not?

d. To annul the last argument, the legalist would ask: "Where are the fruits of repentance?"

5. Here are the natural fruits of repentance. Let this not be once named among you again after experiencing the grace of God and the forgiveness of the "sin of adultery," that is, marrying another while still being legally bound to one's former spouse. Paul's admonition,

a. That the baptized believers remain with their current spouse and work to strengthen the marriage through prayer, fasting, and counsel with the ministers and the church's leadership.

b. The scriptures do not allow the baptized believer to return to their former spouse. If "old things are passed away, and all things become new," there is nothing in the believer's past to return unto or correct.

c. The Lord has forgiven all their sins. The believer has been: "Washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God," 1 Corinthians 6:11; Acts 18:8.

d. This washing occurred in baptism and by cleansing the "precious blood of Christ," Acts 22:16; Revelation 1:4-5; 1 Peter 1:18-19.

6. My last question before I conclude: "Which sin of adultery was not forgiven among these Corinthians?"

a. There are three ways to commit adultery, maybe even four. They are,

1) Committing the physical act of adultery, John 8:4.

2) Looking at a woman to lust after her, Matthew 5:27-28.

3) Remarrying while legally bound to their first spouse, Matthew 19:9.

4) Committing idolatry (worshipping an idol), Jeremiah 3:1.

b. Which of these three or four sins of adultery do you believe God cannot forgive?

c. Someone here might find one or two. I pray; however, we all agree neither!

d. Beloved in the Lord, I affirm that the grace of God can and will forgive all sins, including all forms of adultery, outlined in this lesson. And the church said, Amen. Look here; my time has come and gone! Let me hasten now to my conclusion.

CONCLUSION

A. Outline.

1. Christ's Discourse on "Marriage"

2. Christ's Discourse on "Divorce"

3. Christ's Discourse on "Remarriage"

B. Summarize main points.

1. In this lesson, we discussed "marriage, divorce, and remarriage." As I mentioned, this is one of the most misunderstood and debated topics in the Christian faith. What was evident as we went forward was that there are more diverse opinions on this topic than there is truth! We sought to stand firm in the Bible regarding these issues. There are three positions on this issue: legalism, liberalism, and conservatism. Let me add that Jesus' position on this topic was God's word.

2. First, we addressed the topic of marriage as discussed by the Lord. The Hebrew writer stated: "Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge," Hebrews 13:4. Jesus stated: "Marriage was to be permanent." Divorce was granted because of the hardness of the hearts of the people of Israel. Jesus said it was granted by "Moses because of the hardness of their hearts he suffered them to put away their wives: but from the beginning, it was not so," Matthew 19:8.

3. Second, we discussed the issue of divorce as described by the Lord. He mentioned: "And I say unto you, whosoever shall put away his wife, except it is for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery," Matthew 19:9. The same statement was made in Matthew 5:32. In these scripture Jesus permitted divorce for one reason only, and that was: "infidelity." Or one or both parties are guilty of sexual misconduct outside of their marriage bond. Divorce was permitted for "fornication, adultery or sexual sins." We notice, however, that Jesus did not mention forgiveness or staying with an unfaithful partner. Nor did the Lord mention who could or could not remarry if the divorce was granted for the "exception:" infidelity.

4. Lastly, we discussed the remarriage issue as the Lord described. Notice Jesus said: "And whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery," Matthew 19:9. We concluded that remarriage by one or both parties if divorced for any reason other than the "exception" doth commit adultery. The big question on this topic not mentioned by the Lord - but by all progressive writers - was one or both parties of divorce for the "exception" permitted to remarry without committing adultery? Many writers gave this question exhaustive discussion but with little mention of scripture in the New Testament! The grace of God and the believer's obedience to the gospel of Christ - grant them the forgiveness of *all sins*. The believer is now in Christ; old things have passed away, and all things have become new. Therefore, there is nothing for the one that has been: "washed, sanctified, and justified;" to fix or straighten out - God has done it all for them. And the church said, Amen.

C. Invitation. Present God's pattern of conversion. Jesus said: "Come unto me all ye that labor," Matthew 11:28-30. [Explain the POC, i.e., hearing and believing the Gospel; repentance of all past sins; confessing faith in Christ, as the Son of God; and then, by obeying the Gospel; that is to: "repent and be baptized, in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and to receive the gift of the Holy Ghost," Acts 2:38; Romans 6:17-18; Ephesians 1:12-14].

D. Exhortation. "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved," Jeremiah 8:20.

E. Motivation. Do as Peter directed: "Save thyself," Acts 2:40; Acts 2:36-39; Acts 2:41.

Commendations and Consultations

I submit this verse unto you that I may: "Render therefore to all their dues: tributes to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; and honor to whom honor, (is due)," Romans 13:7. I acknowledge my consultation with these distinguished authors in this lesson.

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A word of thanks to BLB.org:

Thank you for this valuable tool of study, BLB.org. It has been an excellent instrument for me to learn and use the Interlinear to bring my sermons alive to the audience. Thank you very much for this great Application to help study the scriptures.

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